Aperture

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by sfumatosoup

Summary

After the cliff, Hannibal wonders if Will intends to ever apologize.

He hopes he doesn't.

Notes

An offshoot of Semblance from Hannibal's perspective. A reflection post chapter 27. (Semblance is still a WIP, no worries, I'm far from done!)

Reality is a harsh mistress; to spurn her, is to court disaster. *'Kill your darlings,'* she whispers in warning, '*before they kill you.'*

Hannibal is mindful of the hope that sits eager on the fringe of every fondest fantasy; experience has taught him its risks. Still, the small, fragile thing remained; a lonely flame sustained on the merest of kindling. He'd jealously savored every scrap of affection, every tiny kindness from Will: rejoicing every touch and gaze let to linger. Then, the dream had galvanized; fleshed into fruition in the coronation of the moonlight. Dragon slain at their feet, in the wake of their triumph, two Kings looked out together over the precipice of a glorious new age.

The memory is preserved in the eidetic anamnesis of pencil on paper: the reunion under the asterismic glow of the Coma Berenices, wherein a single instance, forgetting to heed Daedalus, unmindful of hubris, Icarus had soared too near the scorching sun. Will's eyes shine back at his, imbued with all his requited passion; a perfect mirror of his own. Turning to the next page, is the inevitable destruction of his wings in the Judas Kiss of a lover's embrace as Will pulls them over the ledge.

In the long weeks after, accosted daily by the sight of their own faces splashed across the news, paranoia chased them from one temporary refuge to the next and the days stretched into a dismal routine of midnight highways and nondescript motel rooms. Their coexistence was a superficial one; as anemic as two ghosts bound to the same space in disparate plains. The lost gloss of Will's eyes haunted Hannibal, following him around when he thought he wouldn't notice.

His misery clung to him, a graceless, irrepressible ache like a disease, imposing itself unwelcome on its subject, whom already nursing his own wounds, chafed at the addition. The mute pleas begged Hannibal for acknowledgment, but he was not inclined to show mercy. This was a man whom had helped himself to his heart like a thief and then on a whim, capriciously trashed it. For all of his profound and extensive wisdom into the intricate workings of Will's psyche, his decision seemed defiant of any sense of logic, but was it arbitrary?

Hannibal is an old friend to entropy. There is nothing quite like winding up the clockwork mouse and watching the cat scramble after it, but Will's stunt was in another league.

To throw to ruin such potential seemed terribly irresponsible.

Often, on the road, at the death of every crippling, stilted exchange, lapsing into silence, Will would stare out the window with a sullen, faraway look, absent-mindedly rubbing at the itch of scabbing stitches. When nightfall at last obscured the passing blur of scenery, with nothing else to distract him, Hannibal would feel his probing gaze searching him desperately: unspoken remorse on the verge of his lips.

Would it slip loose? Could he bring substance to the sin? The monster of it's reality—of his *treachery* hovered over them like a shadow and he abandoned Will, sentencing him to grieve

alone while suffering his own more discreetly in a finger of scotch as the other man slept.

Reaching their destination often near the brink of dawn, bone-tired, they'd peel themselves from the car and lug in their bags. Will would drop onto the bed, and if there wasn't a second, Hannibal would settle himself into the furthest chair, ignoring his companion's tired, desolate eyes boring holes in his back. The open invitation to join him was always there and the expectation proved a hard habit to break from the desperate exception of the first night, when, surrounded in a clutter of bloodied towels and surgical instruments they'd clung to each other under the sheets as if their lives depended on it.

How often did he hear that same small, hurt sigh of resignation—that creak of the bed springs as he'd roll over to glare at the wall? Will often fell asleep with that resentment.. It pinched a crevice between his eyes as he slept.

Once, far away from the village, Temujin and Jamukha had lain together beneath one blanket. Sworn to eternal devotion, the heartbreak of his friend's betrayal burned cold in Genghis Khan.

What obscene pleasure he must have felt, breaking Temujin over his golden belt.

Will's anguish is the sweetest poetry. *Sweeter still* than the remembered bliss of Will pressed to him so intimately-- *the magnificent way they melded together of seawater and blood—*

He recalls the moment they'd first met. The introduction had been brief and informal, without so much as the obligatory handshake but otherwise, altogether *transformative.* The profiler had swept a curious glance over him; his ex-ray eyes flashing against his own for the barest second before swiftly darting away again and Hannibal had stood there stunned: *what had he seen?* In an instant there had been sharp snap of mutual recognition. An *elan vital* acknowledgment of one predator scenting another. It was as if he'd flinched away from an overexposure, and while Hannibal was certain it wasn't courtesy, he considered it might have been self-preservation.

He mulled over it while glancing over the pinned-up photos of the Shrike's victims. *What* was this man?

Despite his dismissive posture and unprepossessing appearance, there was something in his sleepy, leisurely arrogance, the tamped, tightly-coiled energy and manic sheen of his eyes that he couldn't help but find intriguing.

"*I build forts,"* Will had told him.

"*Associations come quickly."*

"*So do forts."*

Taking a seat beside him, Hannibal's nostrils had flared over the sour note of stale coffee, recoiling slightly at the distinctive reek of too many dogs, but the subtler nuances his specialty, he gleaned more without batting an eye: a trace of oil and metal from a hobby that makes rough the palms and discolors the fingernails, the wheat-grassy fragrance of open

fields and the nostalgic lignin of old books. Hannibal grinned to himself. Beneath the drug-store soap and the typical masculine musk of his skin, was an acrid hint of something he couldn't quite place—something *not quite right,* but at the time, he'd been unable to identify it.

In this cursory deduction, he'd learned in seconds enough about Will Graham to whet his appetite. *'What sort of thing is that, that rattles round so merrily,' wondered Briar-rose?*

"*Not fond of eye-contact, are you?"* Hannibal had observed, pricking his finger on the spindle of Will's eyes, as the man suddenly returned his gaze, mouth quirked with an amused smile. *And more fascinating still: a clear reciprocation of interest.*

"*Eyes are distracting. You see too much, you don't see enough…"* Will had replied.

"*I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind. Your values and decency are present, yet shocked at your association, appalled at your dreams,"* Hannibal had mused. *"No forts in the bone arena of your skull for the things you love."*

He'd let himself get carried away and instantly, distinguishing the difference between mild curiosity and focused fascination, Will drew back up his shields. It didn't make for a good first-impression for himself, but Hannibal couldn't regret voicing the observation.

"*Please. Don't psychoanalyze me. You won't like me when I'm psychoanalyzed,"* Will warned, his tone clipped and his eyes hard. Hannibal couldn't be sure if it had been a threat or a promise. If it was the latter, he certainly disagreed. He liked this strange, unpredictable man immensely and so did the monster inside of him.

Over the course of the following year, yearning as Pandora to open the box; to decipher the enigma of Will Graham, he lured him into friendship. He peeled back the layers with precision, vivisecting his mind piece by piece. Each word spoken to his project, specially selected to stoke the fever burning in his brain. With care, he ensured not to burn away *too much*, and beholding the toppling fortifications, his lust burgeoned, untemperable and piercing. Beneath the rubble: *un diamant à l'état brut*—all the more precious for having never been expected, and he found himself hopelessly ensnared, never knowing a desire more bruising in it's violence nor purer in its devastation.

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